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ABSTRACT

A number of community resources available for utilization by the foreign language teacher in the Denver area are listed here, and specific suggestions are made for teachers interested in exploring the resources of their own communities. It is recommended that schools and universities, bilingual-bicultural programs and/or agencies, and cultural centers be contacted as possible sources of information and activity for the foreign language student. Teachers should be aware of the career opportunities available to language students. Often it is possible for students to work with non-English-speaking children and older people in some kind of voluntary educational program. Such work provides extra-curricular language experience, as well as a much-needed community service. Community publications written in the appropriate foreign language are also a valuable tool that can be used both inside and outside the classroom. Organizations and commercial firms mainly concerned with entertainment should also be contacted by the language teacher. Many television and radio stations, for example, schedule foreign language programs; and theaters in many cities offer foreign language productions. (PMP)

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING:

THE UTILIZATION OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES*

In many respects, foreign language study in both the high school and university environment has been one of the most guilty disciplines vis-a-vis the utilization of community resources. We have confined ourselves all too frequently to the classroom with perhaps an extension into the language laboratory while, in most cases, completely neglecting the resources available to us within our local and state communities. Our hesitation may rest somewhat on the easy access to the classroom and laboratory, our own busy schedules, and the difficulty of discovering the precise resources that are applicable. In addition, we are reluctant to take time away from the grammatical study of the language, pressed as we are by supervisors, administrators, parents, and our colleagues who teach the next higher level, and cognizant of the fact that students need as much grammar as we can give them.

However, in the affluent decade of the 60's and as we move into the more difficult period of the 1970's, culture,

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whether spelled with a capital "C" or not, has become an integral aspect of language study. While all of us possess realia, slides, and in some instances tapes garnered during our travels abroad, students quickly tire of reminiscences of the instructor and are anxious to know how and to what extent the language can be used in their own everyday life. This becomes particularly important as students, bombarded daily by television, radio, and newspapers, are increasingly aware of the current economic situation and, therefore, become concomitantly more pragmatic. They demand "utility" from their course of study: utility in the sense of job opportunities, further courses of study, and a greater understanding of their fellow citizens. As language teachers it should be our job to inform the students of this "living" aspect of the language.

The degree of community resources available for utilization by the language teacher will quite naturally depend on two factors: (1) the language taught and (2) the geographical area in which your community is located. Since we are a group of teachers of Spanish and Portuguese and since I personally teach in the Denver area, my following remarks are based on research applicable to this locality. However, let me emphasize that the same sort of opportunities exist in many other regions. I have also taught in Kansas and Wisconsin and while Spanish

influence may not be as great in those areas, there was certainly no lack of local resources that could be utilized by the Spanish teacher. Even those of you who teach in relatively small communities should not feel yourself without these possibilities as most of you are close enough to a larger urban center to take advantage of at least some of the opportunities available there. Furthermore, through your State Department of Education and your State Foreign Language Consultant many traveling exhibits as well as speakers may be engaged to come to you.

Your first step in locating available resources is to contact your local and state agencies. In Denver, for instance, these are the Colorado Council on Arts and Humanities; the Colorado Department of Education, Division of Community Services; the Department of Bilingual Education of the Denver Board of Education; the Instructional Resource Center of the Colorado Department of Education; the Institute for International Education (in their state and/or national offices); and most helpful of all, the Denver Public Library. These agencies will lead you to a myriad of resources, some of which are highly applicable to your situation, others being only peripheral. In the case of Denver one might define eight applicable areas: schools and universities, bilingual-bicultural programs and/or agencies, cultural centers, career opportunities, educational programs,

publications, entertainment, and miscellaneious organizations and individuals.

a) Schools and universities should be checked for foreign students on campus, faculty members with areas of specialization in Spain or Hispanic America, and any special program available through the foreign language departments for junior high or high school students (i.e., the University of Denver's Statewide Foreign Language Festival).

b) The number of bilingual-bicultural programs and agencies available will vary greatly depending upon individual location. In Colorado, for instance, there are a plethora of ethnic, economic, educational, and health related groups that are available to the classroom teacher. To give you a few examples, in Denver alone we have such service organizations as the Pan American Club, the Latin American Educational Foundation, the Colorado Economic Development Association, the Congress of Hispanic Educators, and the Amigos de las Américas.[1]

c) Probably the most obvious sources of community aid are the various cultural centers and/or institutions. Many of these are connected with the fine arts or religious organizations. In Denver again our fine art museum contains an excellent collection of Hispanic and Pre-Colombian art and tours may be arranged with Spanish-speaking guides. Our Lady of Guadalupe

Church provides an important cultural center within the Chicano barrio. Also located in the barrio is the Centro Cultural, connected with the Crusade for Justice which maintains a school and library. Movies in Spanish may be seen at the Aztlán and Azteca Theaters. Something as simple as a trip to the Adelante, a Chicano supermarket, will provide your student with an extremely practical language experience. The Cultural Fine Arts Center offers music, folk dancing, painting, etc., and the Center for Students from Abroad, Office of International Education, on the campus of the University of Denver is a center for foreign students.

d) Career opportunities may be of the most interest. Spanish language preparation offers your student a marketable skill for use in a number of vocational areas. In Colorado, opportunities are available through such diverse agencies and concerns as, for example, the Migrant and Rural Health Section of the State Health Department, Mexicana Airlines, Stouffer's Denver Inn, Operation SER (Service, Employment, and Redevelopment), the Y.W.C.A., Girl Scouts Mile-High Council, as well as advertising firms, and local industries seeking to establish commercial contact with the Spanish-speaking world.

e) The opportunity for your students to work with children and older people in some form of voluntary educational

program not only provides an extra-curricular language experience but a much needed community service as well. In Denver, La Raza Headstart works with children of the Chicano community and the Denver Public Library offers classes in English as a second language for all ages.[2]

f) Community publications written in the appropriate language are also a valuable tool which can be used either inside or outside the classroom. In Denver, for example, two local publications -- the magazine La Luz and the newspaper El Eco -- contain some material in Spanish as well as articles in English which are of interest to the Spanish-speaking community. Moreover, a new publishing house which will serve as a distributor of Mexican-American materials is scheduled to open soon in the Metro area.

g) Organizations and/or commercial firms that are mainly concerned with entertainment can also provide a spark for the language classroom. In this community two television stations schedule locally based programs in Spanish in addition to carrying national children's programs -- Sesame Street and Villa Alegre -- which also involve the use of Spanish. Mexican movies, for instance, are shown on Saturday mornings on KWGN (the independent station), and KRMA, the local PBS station, broadcasts Esta Semana, a program in Spanish which informs viewers

of current activities and issues in the Denver Hispanic Community. In addition, radio station KFSC broadcasts local AM programs entirely in Spanish. Live entertainment may be arranged through the Chicano theater, affiliated with Colorado College in Colorado Springs, and the Fiesta Colorado Dance Ensemble who are proficient in both Spanish and Hispanic American dances.

h) Finally, scattered throughout this community are various organizations and individuals who not only may provide one with informational resources but are also willing to make personal visits to one's classroom or language club. The Mexicana Airlines office here in Denver willingly provides films and representatives for school programs. Occasionally an airline employee on layover may also be available. Local businesses, such as import/export firms, which have dealings with the Hispanic world, are also sources of demonstrations and speakers. Moreover, the University of Colorado Medical Center has Hispanic interns and/or residents who are willing to visit Spanish classes. Finally, the Mexican Consulate is always more than happy to foster cultural exchange and understanding.

In conclusion, there are a number of resources available to the language teacher within her home community, wherever that community may be. This short discussion, using Denver as a model, will, I hope, be of some help in suggesting new and

profitable areas of involvement between the language teacher and the local community. As I have tried to show, the resources are diverse and sometimes rather mundane. It takes imagination and a little investigation in many instances to uncover these useful additions to the standard language curriculum.

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FOOTNOTES

[1]In addition to the organizations mentioned in the text the following Denver groups may also be contacted: Latin American Research and Service Agency, Good American Organization, League of United Latin American Citizens, LULAC Contractors Association, Operation SER, Twenty and One Club, Metro Denver Urban Coalition, and the Platte Valley Action Council.

[2]The following educational programs are also of interest: Bilingual-Bicultural Education, Education Commission of the States; Information of Toys and Games of Mexico, Metropolitan State College; Bilingual Education, Minorities of the Barrio; and Community Services, Denver Public Library.